

PHILOSOPHY (PH)

PH 101 Problems of Philosophy (3 credits)

This course seeks to help the student think rationally and critically about basic questions concerning the meaning of human life and our place in society and the universe, and to recognize the bearing of these questions on contemporary social issues. This course exposes students to both classical and contemporary philosophical problems. Among problems for possible discussion are the existence of God, freedom and responsibility, human nature and happiness, appearance and reality, ethics and the environment, abortion and individual rights, affirmative action and equality, love and sex, and law and authority.

PH 102 Practical Ethics (3 credits)

Context and Perspectives: Value, Ethics, and Society

Students who have taken PH 101 not eligible for this course

Our lives abound with questions about what is right and wrong, good and bad, ethical and unethical. How should we live and why should we live that way? What should our society allow and what should it forbid? How should we relate to one another as citizens, as coworkers, and as human beings? Ethical theory aims to help us answer these daunting but pressing questions. In this course, students will learn how to use ethical theory to analyze and evaluate differing perspectives on contemporary issues such as abortion, gun rights, racial and gender justice, online privacy, climate change, immigration, animal rights, and economic inequality. Students will develop their capacity to think critically, rationally, and creatively about the ethical questions we face as individuals and as a society.

Typically Offered: Fall and Spring

PH 103 Ultimate Questions (3 credits)

Context and Perspectives: Culture, Change, and Behavior

Students who have taken PH 101 not eligible for this course

Nobody makes it through life without at some stage being confronted with the ultimate questions about human existence: Who am I? Why am I here? What do I know? These and related topics, such as, for instance, the scientific method, the nature of truth, or the existence of God, are at the heart of philosophical inquiry. They are primarily theoretical (as opposed to practical or ethical) concerns that are largely addressed in metaphysics and epistemology – the areas of philosophy that reflect on the fundamental structure of the world, our place within and our ability to acquire knowledge about it. This course explores these questions through a number of historical and contemporary philosophical texts, as well as relevant perspectives in empirical disciplines (for instance psychology and psychiatry). It is designed to help students organize and deepen their thinking about the human condition.

Typically Offered: Fall and Spring

PH 104 Critical Thinking (3 credits)

Context and Perspectives: Culture Change and Behavior

Students who have taken PH 101 not eligible for this course

This course aims to boost your critical thinking skills. You will learn how to use some basic tools of logic and philosophy to assess and improve your own reasoning and to evaluate the reasoning of others. Topics covered include: how to identify, interpret, and evaluate arguments; how to formulate good arguments; how to identify and avoid common mistakes in reasoning; how to evaluate information and evidence; and how to avoid being duped by misinformation.

Typically Offered: Once a year

PH 130 Business Ethics: Corporate Social Responsibility (3 credits)

Context and Perspectives: Value, Ethics, and Society

This course examines the various meanings of corporate social responsibility by looking at the nature of the corporation and the character structure of its managers, both historically and in the present. After investigating several philosophical theories concerning the ideal use of power, the emphasis is on the application of principled moral thinking concerning corporate responsibility to such topics as employees, consumers, local communities, government, environmental issues, advertising, payoffs and bribes, the role and structure of corporate whistleblowing, privacy rights, poverty and equal rights, and other ethical issues that relate to corporate technology and the individual. Some attention is given to the moral evaluation of entire economic systems.

Typically Offered: Once a year

PH 131 Business Ethics: Philosophy of Work (3 credits)

Context and Perspectives: Value, Ethics, and Society

What should work look like in the 21st century? This course explores personal work values and a wide range of moral questions about contemporary work. It includes topics such as: globalization, technological change, wages and working conditions, work-life balance, discrimination and diversity, and workplace democracy. Texts include cases, academic articles, documentary films, literature, journalism, and discussions of public and institutional policies. The course draws on moral theories and students' overall academic expertise to identify problems and defend solutions.

Typically Offered: Once a year

PH 133 Business Ethics: International Business Ethics (3 credits)

Context and Perspectives: Value, Ethics, and Society

The course explores ethical issues confronted by corporations operating in the global marketplace, where laws, moral standards and cultural customs can vary widely from country to country. Possible issues to be discussed: bribery, environmental and safety standards, fair wages, sales and marketing, business-government relations, and the role of multinational corporations in developing nations. To assess the morals of multinational corporations, a number of cases will be analyzed from the perspective of a variety of ethical frameworks.

Typically Offered: Once a year

PH 134 Healthcare Ethics (3 credits)

Context and Perspectives: Value, Ethics, and Society

This course examines ethical issues that arise in healthcare. Possible topics include the ethics of medical procedures such as abortion and euthanasia; the rights and duties of patients and healthcare professionals; the ethics of reproductive technologies; the management of medical information; justice in the distribution of healthcare resources; and the role of health in the good life.

Typically Offered: Once a year

PH 135 Special Problems in Business and Professional Ethics (3 credits)

This course presents an opportunity for students to examine in depth special issues and problems of business and professional ethics. Possible topics include accounting ethics, computer ethics, ethics and business-government relations, legal ethics, medical ethics, ethics and the problem of distributive justice, and private property.

Typically Offered: Every two or more years

PH 138 Environmental Ethics (3 credits)*Context and Perspectives: Value, Ethics, and Society*

This course investigates the complex dimensions of the ethical relationship between humanity and the natural environment. Discusses a variety of theories and proposals concerning the nature of that relationship, including both anthropocentric and nonanthropocentric viewpoints. The course relates these ideas to the present environmental crisis, and to the duties and responsibilities that businesses have to protect and preserve the environment.

*Typically Offered: Once a year***PH 140 Disability, Values & Society (3 credits)***Context and Perspectives: Race, Gender, and Inequality*

Disability is and always has been a universal aspect of human experience. Every year, millions of people live with some form of physical or cognitive disability, and all of us have the potential to become disabled at any time. But what is disability exactly? Is it simply a medical problem? Or do disabilities arise from a mismatch between a person's body and her social environment? Is having a disability necessarily bad for you? What value does disability contribute to society? Drawing upon philosophy, memoirs, film, and other sources, this course will explore these and related questions with a particular focus on disability in the United States. Potential topics include different models of disability, the disability rights movement in the U.S., the ethics of causing and preventing disability, feminist perspectives on disability, disability in popular culture, and the relationship between disability and technology.

*Typically Offered: Once a year***PH 142 Sports, Games & Values (3 credits)***Context and Perspectives: Value, Ethics, and Society*

Sports and games are a central part of the human experience, and raise deep and complex philosophical questions. This course will examine a selection of these questions, such as: What is the connection between a game and its rules? Is foul simulation (diving or flopping) a form of cheating? What is the purpose of segregating competitors by gender in sports, and how should gender be determined? Should violent sports like boxing and football be abolished? Are college athletes, especially those from minority groups, exploited? Are sports and games worthwhile pursuits or a waste of time? In exploring these and related questions, this course prepares students to be more reflective players and consumers of sports and games.

*Typically Offered: Once a year***PH 160 AI, Technology, and Values (3 credits)***Context & Perspectives: Values, Ethics, and Society*

Artificial intelligence and other advanced technologies are integrated with virtually every aspect of human life. This course will examine various current and emerging technologies through a philosophical and ethical lens. Much of the focus will be on artificial intelligence, which is radically transforming work, education, business, entertainment, medicine and science, politics, and the media. We will explore the nature and ethics of technology and how AI and other technologies are impacting and shaping society and culture. We will also critically evaluate the significance, benefits, and costs of a range of emerging technologies.

*Typically Offered: Once a year***PH 162 Love, Sex, and Robots (3 credits)***Context and Perspectives: Values, Ethics, and Society*

This is an applied ethics course on the topic of sex and love in relation to new and emerging technologies. The course starts with a brief overview of the philosophical literature on the ethics of sex and love. Topics covered include friendship, romantic love, consent, sexual autonomy, hookup culture, sex work. Following, a significant portion of the class will be dedicated to exploring a range of moral issues that arise when navigating interactions between humans and artificial intelligence, including friendships, romances, and sexual encounters involving members of different genders and sexual identities. The course will also consider the ethical dynamics of using of artificial intelligence and deep learning technology in the pornography industry.

*Typically Offered: Once a year***PH 170 Life and Death (3 credits)***Context & Perspectives: Values, Ethics, and Society*

The most urgent and challenging ethical questions that we face, both as individuals and collectively, are matters of life and death. When does a human life begin? Is it ever wrong to create a new life? What is death, and is it bad to die? When is it ethically permissible to end a life? In this course, we will examine and reflect upon a range of philosophical views about life, death, procreation, and killing. Topics may include the nature and value of life and death, the ethics of having children, cloning, genetic engineering, suicide and euthanasia, killing in war, capital punishment, killing animals, and abortion.

*Typically Offered: Once a year***PH 180 Happiness and the Meaning of Life (3 credits)**

Each of us comes into existence, lives for a time, and eventually dies. How do we make the most of our lives? We all want to lead a happy and meaningful life, but what exactly is happiness? And what makes life meaningful? Indeed, given our modest place in this vast universe, is it even possible for us to live meaningful lives? Through the examination and discussion of philosophical writings and empirical studies, we will explore theoretical and practical questions about living a good life. Topics may include philosophical and psychological theories of well-being, analyses of absurdity and meaningfulness, and conceptions of the good life in various philosophical and religious traditions, such as Stoicism, Buddhism, and Daoism.

*Typically Offered: Once a year***PH 216 Modern Philosophy: Knowledge and Values (3 credits)***Context and Perspectives: Culture, Change, and Behavior*

This course examines the work of important philosophers from the 16th to 19th centuries. It includes topics such as foundations for knowledge of the physical world, the nature of mind and matter, freedom and determinism, moral values, liberty, the existence of God and the authority of religion, and human liberation. Philosophers to be studied are chosen from Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Locke, Berkeley, Hume, Kant, Hegel, Mill and Marx.

Typically Offered: Every two or more years

PH 252 Theories of Knowledge (3 credits)*Context and Perspectives: Culture, Change, and Behavior*

This course examines the most important questions that we can ask about our beliefs: When should we take something that we believe to be knowledge and not mere belief? What sort of evidence, reasons or assurances must we have for some belief we hold in order to be justified in holding it? How should we respond to those skeptics who deny that we have knowledge about this for that area of human concern (for example, of ultimate reality, of ethics or of God)? And how should we respond to the radical skeptic who denies that we have any knowledge at all? The course will gain focus on these and similar questions in order to help the student gain a deeper understanding of the nature and limits of human knowledge.

*Typically Offered: Once a year***PH 253 Theories of Reality (3 credits)***Context and Perspectives: Culture, Change, and Behavior*

This course is concerned with questions having to do with the nature of existence or reality. Concerning the nature of existence or reality, some have held that everything that exists ultimately reduces to material things or processes "Atoms dancing in the void" as the ancient materialist, Democritus, put it. Others (Bishop Berkeley, for example) have denied the reality of the physical world entirely, asserting that everything that exists is ultimately reducible to spiritual or mind-like things. On the other hand, many in the Western world have embraced some form of metaphysical dualism, which affirms the reality of both the spiritual and the material world; still others (for example, certain Hindus) have denied all such categories, affirming that everything, except for the indivisible, indescribable One, is an illusion. Finally, certain pragmatists and postmodernists claim that we should completely abandon the entire construct.

*Typically Offered: Once a year***PH 254 Special Topics in Philosophy (3 credits)**

This course examines selected issues in philosophy. Possible topics include consciousness and cognition, language and meaning, knowledge and justification, free will, the existence of God, and the problem of evil.

*Typically Offered: Every two or more years***PH 255 Inquiry and Injustice (3 credits)***Context and Perspectives: Culture, Change, and Behavior*

We are curious creatures in search of answers. Where are my keys? Is this feeling really love or just lust? Should I join the revolution? From the mundane to the extraordinary, and everything in between, inquiry is a crucial part of our every-day life in a social world. However, inquiring environments—the spaces where we put forth questions, seek out answers, and look to others for advice, guidance, and support—can also be sites of hostility, distrust, and injustice. This is a course in applied epistemology: it uses philosophical insights concerning the rationality of belief and knowledge and applies them to real-world issues of practical importance.

PH 270 Consciousness and Experience (3 credits)*Context and Perspectives: Culture, Change, and Behavior*

Consciousness is utterly familiar to each of us and yet has proved elusive to any systematic study. We all seem to know intuitively what it is, but it turns out to be very hard to spell out or explain that knowledge. This course will address some key questions about the nature of consciousness by drawing on philosophical and psychological sources. These questions include: How can we explain the relationship between brain events and conscious experience? Is a naturalistic explanation of consciousness in principle available? Can we make sense of phenomena such as lucid dreaming and out-of-body experiences? How should we think of the place of consciousness in the universe?

*Typically Offered: Once a year***PH 271 Other Minds (3 credits)***Context and Perspectives: Culture, Change, and Behavior*

When you see another person, you think of that person as having a mind. What, though, entitles you to hold that belief? After all, you could have encountered a zombie, or you could be the only mind in the universe and everything you experience is just a matter of your imagination. This problem has a long-standing history in philosophy. It is called the 'Problem of Other Minds'. In recent years, it has seen renewed interest, partly because of psychological and neurophysiological work that sheds new empirical light on how we come to understand others as minded creatures, and their movements as actions, on the basis of perceptual experience.

*Typically Offered: Once a year***PH 272 Perception and Perspectives (3 credits)***Context & Perspectives: Culture, Change, & Behavior*

This course examines the nature of perception from a philosophical and psychological lens. It inquires into the connection between perception and perspectives. All perception is from some perspective, but we see whole things, not the surfaces from which we have perceptual information. One question we will be considering is how this is possible. Another, closely related question is how perspectives inform our thinking about the objects of perception. How can we know that we are perceiving, and communicating about, the same objects if our perspectives on them are distinct? And how can we come to terms with differences in our value judgements about perceived objects (or events or actions) if perspectives are value-laden? Thinking about perception turns out to be vital for making sense of a world in which our perspectives on public events are starkly distinct.

*Typically Offered: Every two or more years***PH 274 The Computational Mind (3 credits)**

What does it mean to think? How are computers different from people? How are they the same? This is a class about asking deep questions about intelligence and exploring their far-reaching consequences. Students will survey the history of approaches in artificial intelligence as well as related disciplines like neuroscience, philosophy of mind, and psychology. We will cover concepts such as alignment, connectionism, consciousness, causation, generalizability, information, learning, and symbolism.

Typically Offered: As needed

PH 275 Loneliness and the Self (3 credits)

Context and Perspectives: Culture, Change, and Behavior

Loneliness is a pervasive experience of our time. Ever more people report feeling lonely, to the extent that experts talk of a "loneliness epidemic". Yet it is not obvious what it is that the lonely person experiences: it can't just be the absence of others or even particular others. Not all hermits feel lonely but some socialites do; you can feel lonely in a crowd but not at all lonely in splendid isolation. In some sense, loneliness is a self-directed emotion. It is an awareness of yourself as being insufficiently connected with other people. This course explores the connection between the self as a social agent and other people. On this basis it then investigates loneliness from a philosophical and psychological perspective. It ends by considering the nexus between loneliness and the political and digital domains.

PH 298 Experimental Course in Phil (3 credits)

Experimental courses explore curriculum development, with specific content intended for evolution into a permanent course. A topic may be offered twice before it becomes a permanent course. Students may repeat experimental courses with a different topic for credit.

Typically Offered: Every two or more years

PH 305 Mathematical Logic (3 credits)

Pre-Req: MA I & MA II Sequence or (MA 107 or MA 139)

Mathematics analyzes the world in a precise, quantitative way. Mathematical logic applies that same precise analysis to mathematics itself. Analysis of mathematical formulas, how they are constructed and how they relate, lead to the two most famous formal reasoning systems, classical propositional logic and classical predicate logic. Arguments constructed through formal reasoning in these systems are compared with informal reasoning. Examples of logic in algebra and the foundations of calculus lead to consideration of historically important questions such as, "Do we know that the generally accepted rules for reasoning are correct, or reliable?" This leads to the study of historical roots of non-classical logics and their relationship to computer science.

Note: *This course is also listed as MA 305 (<https://catalog.bentley.edu/search/?P=MA%20305>); it can be used as either a Philosophy or Mathematical Sciences elective, depending on which designator the student chooses at registration.*

Typically Offered: Every two or more years

PH 308 Capitalism and its Critics (3 credits)

Context and Perspectives: Institutions and Power

Our economic system is mostly a capitalist one. Is that a good thing? Or a bad thing? What is capitalism anyway? What are the alternatives to it, and what's good and bad about them? This is a course about the moral foundations of capitalism. You will learn what capitalism is, what can be said for it, and what can be said against it. You will emerge a more thoughtful defender, or critic, of capitalism. Reading from classic and contemporary sources, we will discuss such topics as the nature and value of property rights, the justification of the welfare state, exploitation in firms and markets, and the connection between capital, freedom, and democratic self-rule.

PH 310 Ethical Theory (3 credits)

Context and Perspectives: Value, Ethics, and Society

This course surveys important traditional and contemporary ethical views, with emphasis on relating reflective morality to life in the world today. It includes an investigation of absolutism versus relativism, egoism versus altruism, the nature of moral properties and moral language, and the justification of ethical theories, such as utilitarianism, deontology, and virtue ethics.

Typically Offered: Fall and Spring

PH 311 Social Philosophy (3 credits)

This course examines selected topics in traditional and contemporary theories of society, such as utopia, ideology, social class, racism, economic determinism, freedom and the "post-industrial" age. Explores the topics both historically and systematically, focusing on contemporary discussions in the philosophy of the social sciences. Draws on the writings of social theorists such as Plato, Hobbes, Rousseau, Adam Smith, Hegel, Marx, Mills, Freud, Weber, Keynes, Mao Zedong, Marcuse and Habermas.

Typically Offered: Every two or more years

PH 312 Liberty, Morality and Law (3 credits)

Context and Perspectives: Value, Ethics, and Society

It's a free country, or so they say. But the state places many constraints on our behavior. Which of these are justified, and which are not? Should you be able to say hateful things? Drive without wearing a seatbelt? Sell your organs? In general, what moral principles should guide rule-makers as they devise rules for a just society? Potential topics of discussion include the nature and value of human freedom, the significance of morality, justice, economic choice, freedom of thought and expression, paternalism and punishment.

Typically Offered: Once a year

PH 313 Political Thought From A Global Perspective (3 credits)

Context and Perspectives: Globalization

We live in a tightly integrated world. There have been tremendous benefits from the globalization of the world: the world is wealthier, healthier, more democratic, and technologically advanced. Yet a deeper reflection may reveal issues that require our urgent critical attention, such as climate change, global injustice, human rights violations, wars, and many others. If we believe in equal dignity of every human being and wish to spread the benefits of the globalized world more equitably across the globe, we should inform ourselves about and critically reflect on key global issues affecting our world today. The aim of this course is to help students do exactly that and gain a critical global perspective, which is a must for global citizens of the 21st century. As a course in political philosophy, this course will not only inform but also help students reason critically by employing the philosophical method, which promotes critical thinking.

Typically Offered: Fall

PH 315 East Asian Philosophy, Religion, and Culture (3 credits)*Context and Perspectives: Globalization*

East Asian countries (China, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, Singapore, and Taiwan) have emerged as economic power houses in the contemporary world. Many experts have attributed their economic success to their philosophical and religious traditions of Confucianism, Daoism, and Chan (Zen) Buddhism. These traditions span over 3,000 years of East Asian history and have created the rich, deep, and complex cultures of East Asia. In the era of globalization, understanding the philosophical and religious traditions of Confucianism, Daoism, and Chan (Zen) Buddhism and how they have contributed to East Asian cultures is a must for students who aspire to become informed global citizens. This course will provide a broad overview of East Asian philosophy and religion by reading selections from major schools of Confucianism, Daoism, and Chan (Zen) Buddhism and help students understand how these traditions are constitutive of and still influence contemporary East Asian cultures by viewing relevant films.

*Typically Offered: Every two or more years***PH 316 Feminist Theory (3 credits)***Context and Perspectives: Race, Gender, and Inequality*

What is the nature of sex-based oppression, and how can we successfully recognize and resist it? This course aims to introduce students to feminist theoretical approaches to the above and related questions. Through readings of contemporary feminist philosophical texts, we will explore the social-structural source of sexist oppression, as well as the impact of such oppression on the self, knowledge, and values.

*Typically Offered: Once a year***PH 317 Democracy and Power (3 credits)***Context & Perspectives: Institutions and Power*

Is social media ruining democracy? Do corporations have too much political power? Is democracy doomed to disintegrate into discord and disorder? What exactly is democracy anyway and how is it supposed to work? Would some other political system work better? In this course, we will explore such questions from the perspective of political philosophy. We will examine different forms of political power, consider what makes political power legitimate, and ask how political power ought to be distributed. We will discuss arguments for and against democracy, and evaluate different visions of what democracy should look like. Finally, we'll use what we've learned to think through some of the problems plaguing contemporary democracies, and to critically reflect on the role of business in democratic politics.

*Typically Offered: Once a year***PH 318 Race and Rights (3 credits)**

This course investigates the metaphysics, ethics, and politics of race. We begin with a discussion of the nature of race. Is race biologically real? A social construction? Or simply an illusion? We then consider racism, asking whether and in what sense it is an interpersonal and/or a structural phenomenon. Finally we consider several ethical issues in which race and identity play a central role. Possible topics include discrimination, affirmative action, profiling, punishment, reparations, immigration, and civil disobedience. Students will engage with opposing viewpoints and be encouraged to develop views of their own.

*Typically Offered: Once a year***PH 319 Race, Ethnicity, and Nationality in America (3 credits)***Context and Perspectives: Race, Gender, and Inequality*

The aim of the course is to introduce Bentley students to philosophical issues and debates concerning race, ethnicity, and nationality in the US. In the era of Black Lives Matter and Stop Asian Hate, some understanding of current issues relating to race, ethnicity, and nationality in the United States is a must for informed American citizens of the 21st century, especially those who aspire to be business leaders. Yet one of the best ways to understand these issues is through critical thinking. This course aims to help Bentley students become critical thinkers regarding vitally important topics of race, ethnicity, and nationality in the United States.

*Typically Offered: Once a year***PH 320 Human Rights and Global Governance (3 credits)***Context and Perspectives: Globalization*

This course introduces students to key debates about human rights and global governance. An understanding of these topics is necessary for everyone, and especially for those who aspire to lead in a global economy. Potential topics to be discussed include the nature of human rights, economic rights, rights for individuals and groups, the value of democracy, colonialism and self-determination, the significance of national citizenship, and global justice.

*Typically Offered: Once a year***PH 323 Colonialism, Imperialism, Postcolonialism: A Philosophical Examination (3 credits)***Context and Perspective: Globalization*

Western imperialism and colonialism have created our tightly integrated world that we take for granted. But what are imperialism and colonialism? Why focus on Western imperialism and colonialism? What are the processes by which international law and the current global governance structure developed in the age of Western imperialism and colonialism? How did major philosophers justify Western imperialism and colonialism? What is postcolonialism, and is it necessary? What are the benefits or harms of Western imperialism and colonialism? This course will explore these and related questions by drawing on philosophy, history, sociology, and other sources. As a course in political philosophy, the aim of this course is to not only inform but also help students reason critically about these important issues by employing the philosophical method, which promotes critical thinking.

*Typically Offered: Once a year***PH 401 Directed Study in Philosophy (3 credits)**

This course presents as opportunity for superior students to engage in specialized study. Allows repetition for credit.

*Typically Offered: Every two or more years***PH 402 Seminar in Philosophy (3 credits)**

This course provides opportunity for students in small groups to study selected topics. Allows repetition for credit.

Typically Offered: Every two or more years

PH 421 Internship in Philosophy (3 credits)

An internship provides students with an opportunity to gain on-the-job experience and apply principles and issues raised in the academic discipline to a work environment. Students are required to attend pre-internship workshops sponsored by the Pulsifer Career Development Center, meet regularly with a faculty advisor, and develop a final paper or special project.

Typically Offered: Every two or more years